

well known fact, the dehydrogenation of alcohol by means of oxygen. For this purpose, the fluid to be tested, if coloured, or a mixed one, is to be distilled in the water bath until one-third of it passes over. Should the liquor contain any acetic acid, this may be saturated previous to distillation with carbonate of soda, in order to remove the vinegar smell, which might interfere with the odour of the subsequent test. Into the distilled liquor supposed to contain alcohol, should be dropped a crystal or two of chromic acid and the liquor stirred. If the smallest quantity of alcohol be present, the green oxide of chrome will begin to be disengaged, and at the same time the smell of aldehyde is distinctly perceptible.

By means of this simple test, it is possible to distinguish a drop of alcohol in half an ounce, and even in an ounce of water. When chromic acid is not at hand, the experiment may be made with bichromate of potash and sulphuric acid. This perhaps affords the most distinct method of performing the experiment, and may be conducted as follows. Drop in a few grains of powdered bichromate into a small flat glass (which tapers towards the bottom) containing the solution to be examined, and add a few drops of oil of vitriol. If alcohol is present, the green oxide will be observed to be developed on the surface of the undissolved salt, and the characteristic odour of aldehyde will speedily be perceptible.—*Monthly Journal of Medical Science*, December, 1846. (For Dr. Percy's method of detecting alcohol, see *Amer. Jour. Med. Sciences*, new series, vol. iv., p. 515.)      T. R. B.

69. *Invalidity of a Contract made by a Lunatic* (Molton v. Camroux, English Court of Exchequer).—This was an action by the representatives of Thomas Lee, deceased, to recover from the National Loan Fund Life Insurance Company, the sum of £355, paid as consideration for an annuity granted by the Company to him on the 29th of August, 1843, upon the ground that he was of unsound mind and incapable of making any valid disposition of his goods at the time when the annuity was granted. Soon after that time the symptoms of insanity became so very decided that he was placed in a lunatic asylum. The attorneys employed by his representatives wrote to the defendants, stating that fact, and requiring them to cancel the policies and refund the sum now sought to be recovered. The company declined to do so, and upon the 14th of October, 1844, Lee died of paralysis of the brain, in Dr. Warburton's lunatic asylum. The question, therefore, for the decision of the jury was, whether the deceased was of unsound mind upon the 29th of August, 1843, when the policy was executed; if so, the contract was void. Upon this subject, several witnesses were called on behalf of the defendants, to show that the bearing and demeanour of the deceased, when dealing with the Company, were of such a character as to render it impossible to imagine that he was of unsound mind. The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff for the full amount claimed.—*London Atlas*, Dec. 26, 1846.      T. R. B.

70. *Procuring of Abortion*. *Commonwealth v. Luceba Parker*.—The defendant was charged with having thrust into the womb and body of a married woman, then pregnant with child, a sharp metallic instrument, with the intent to cause and procure the said woman to miscarry and prematurely bring forth said child, and that in consequence it was born dead.

On the trial it appeared in evidence that the acts alleged in the indictment were done by the defendant, with the consent of the woman. The jury found a verdict of guilty and her counsel moved an arrest of judgment, because it was not set forth, that the woman was quick with child, at the time the operation was performed. The judge instructed the jury that it was not necessary to prove this fact, but he deemed the question involved so important that he reported it to the Supreme Court (of Massachusetts).

After argument, the Chief Justice, in delivering the opinion of the Court, stated that the whole matter resolved itself into one question: "whether it is an indictable offence at common law, to administer a drug or perform an operation upon a pregnant woman, with her consent, with the intention and for the purpose of causing an abortion and premature birth of the fetus of which she is pregnant, by means of which an abortion is in fact caused, without averring and proving at the time of the administration of such drug or the performance of such operation, such woman was quick with child."

There is another case, he observes, which resembles it in fact, but falls within another principle. The use of violence with an intent to procure miscarriage without the consent of the woman, is an highly aggravated assault and indictable at common law. So, where, upon a similar attempt, by drugs or instruments, the death of the mother ensues, the party making such attempt, with or without the consent of the mother, is guilty of the death of the mother on the ground that it is an act done without lawful purpose.

But, at common law, the Court were of opinion that no indictment would lie, for attempts to procure abortion with the consent of the mother, until she is quick with child, although all must agree, that such acts are in a high degree offensive to good morals and injurious to society.

It is mentioned, in a note to this case, that the Legislature of Massachusetts subsequently made provision for the punishment of the offence with which the defendant was charged in this case.—*Metcalf's Massachusetts Reports*, vol. ix.

T. R. B.

71. *Case of Poisoning by Arsenic relieved by the use of Magnesia*.—Mr. LEPAGE, apothecary at Gisors, states the following in a letter to M. Bussy, director of the School of Pharmacy, with a request that it may be laid before the Royal Academy of Medicine.

On the 30th of May, 1846, at 6 A. M., Dr. Ardiege and myself were requested, by the Commissary of Police, to visit P. Delamotte, who, it was stated, had poisoned himself the evening previous. We found him suffering severely with pain, and his lips still covered with a whitish powder. On inquiring of him, as to the cause of this suicidal act, he stated that the evening previous, he had murdered a female with whom he had lived in adultery, and in order to escape the hands of justice had swallowed, at 11 o'clock, a large cupful of arsenic dissolved in water.

It appears that Delamotte had eaten a hearty supper previous to taking the poison. He had vomited and purged repeatedly during the night. His present condition is, a small irregular pulse, heat over the body, a sense of constriction in the throat, excessive thirst, horrible pain in the stomach and bowels, urine scanty and high coloured, respiration easy, but the patient is groaning incessantly.

We put in use the new method proposed by M. Bussy, and administered calcined magnesia suspended in water during ten hours (he took about 100 grammes), and under its effect we had the pleasure of observing all the alarming symptoms disappear; the colic ceased, he passed a quiet night, but without sleep, and the next day was convalescent.

During the administration of the magnesia the patient vomited frequently for the first six hours. The matters thus vomited were collected and thrown on a filter, and the transparent liquid was tested by the apparatus of Marsh, and large arsenical spots were produced.

From these results, the reporters are of opinion that magnesia thus given forms with arsenious acid, an arsenic insoluble in water, and that its efficacy as an antidote is hence unquestionable.

It is probable that Delamotte swallowed about fifteen grammes of arsenic. As a criminal, he was subsequently removed to prison and continued in good health until the 5th of June, when he was found dead, from hanging himself in his cell.—*Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Médecine*, June 9, 1846.

T. R. B.

72. *Sale of Poisonous Substances*.—The French Government has recently revised its laws and ordinances on this subject. By a royal ordinance, dated October 26, 1826, the following are designated as belonging to that class:—

Acetate of mercury, acetate of morphine, acetate of zinc, arsenious acid and the various preparations in which it enters, cyanhydric (prussic acid), aconite and its compounds, sulphuric alcohol (eau de rabel), anemone pulsatilla and its preparations, false angustura and its preparations, atropine, belladonna and its preparations, brucine and its preparations, bryony and its preparations, cantharides and their preparations, carbonate of copper, carbonate of ammonia, cevadilla and its preparations, chloride of antimony, chloride of morphine, ammoniac-mercurial chloride, chlorides of mercury, hemlock and its preparations, codeine and its preparations, colocynth and its preparations, coneine and its preparations, cocculus